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## THE HASKIN LETTER THE MAN AND THE JOB II—HARVEST HANDS

By Frederic J. Haskin.

In that belt of grain producing states that lies between Texas and Canada there will be needed this summer for a short time 100,000 working men who will have to move on again when the fall comes. They are necessary that the crops may be harvested. There are other sections where there will be great temporary needs for labor at the time of the ripening of other crops. There are fruit crops to be gathered, hops to be picked, cotton to be brought to the gin. The manner in which this seasonal labor may be supplied without its being stranded when the work is completed, is one of the knotty problems which the federal department of labor is attempting to solve.

The problem is hardest in the Great Plain states. The resident population of those states is sufficient to carry on the work on its farms except at harvest time. The first of June is the season for cutting grain and threshing in Oklahoma. It is two weeks later in Kansas, and does not come in the Dakotas until the middle of July. There are sturdy farmers and their sons, who, year after year, start with the harvest in the south and work north with the season. They get three or four months work by knowing just how to play the game. But aside from these, it is necessary that the grain states should get great numbers of laborers from the outside. Last year, for instance, Kansas asked the federal government to send it 40,000 men. Missouri called for 30,000 and other states for similar numbers. To supply great numbers of men for a short time—that was the difficult problem that the government attempted to handle.

The youthful department of labor made almost its initial experiment as an employment agency when it last year attempted to fill this order. Yet it was to a considerable extent successful; in addition to which it gained some valuable experience. The call last year came from the state labor commissioners, and it was with them that the federal government did business. In response to their pleas for help the government sent out placards to postmasters in adjacent states who were instructed to bulletin them. These placards set forth that harvest hands were wanted in the states named, and the points at which applicants should apply were enumerated. They stated the nature of the work, the wages paid, and recited the fact that the harvest season was, but about six weeks long in given localities. Those seeking this sort of work were warned that there would be no local employment when the harvest was over.

The result of this governmental campaign for harvest hands was that laborers were abundant in the grain states with great expedition. There was, however, a somewhat sorrowful aftermath. Many of the laborers who followed the harvests had no place in particular to go after they were over. They spent their earnings and became stranded. The situation was unfortunate for them and for the communities in which they were placed. There was further trouble due to the fact that, when a postmaster puts up a placard, he is likely to let it stay up indefinitely. So it happened that, along toward Christmas, there were still displayed in many post offices announcements to the effect that harvest hands were needed in the West. Many of the unwary saw these signs, neglected to note the specified dates, and wrote or actually went after the jobs. Their experiences were not happy.

The department of labor has been conferring with the state commissioners upon the problem of handling the harvest hands after the season is over. The consensus of opinion is that not more than 10 or 15 per cent of these men can be given permanent employment. The problem of getting them out of the communities after the season is over is as yet unsolved. Great care is to be taken, however, to warn them that there is labor only during the harvests. The general labor information that the government is just now gathering may also be sufficient, by that time, so that it will be able to direct the harvest hands to places where there are other demands for men of their kind.

Secretary Wilson has, however, an entirely different scheme for solving the problem of seasonal labor and one which has a very pretty story back of it. The secretary was originally a coal miner. He had difficulties in that line of endeavor, however, which led to his being black-listed. This made it impossible for him to get work in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, where he had formerly labored, and he drifted up into New York where he got employment in the iron mines. He had not been working long when, suddenly, the miners shut down for two weeks and all hands scurried away to the hop fields. I developed that this was a local custom. Each year at hop picking time the mines closed that was a great occasion to the miners and was regarded by them as a vacation and time of jubilation. Wilson, the young miner, went along with the rest, received the benefit of the change and the out of doors life and returned to the mines greatly refreshed and improved in health.

When this same Wilson became a cabinet officer, faced with the problems of the well being of the nation's laboring people and the gathering of a nation's crops, he remembered the iron mine and the hop picking. Why, he asked, could not this principle be applied to the big problem that every year faces the nation? Why could not seasonal labor in all communities where there is a short period of in-pend demand be supplied by drawing on nearby employers of great numbers of workers.

The federal government will this season attempt to bring this arrangement about on an experimental basis. It is now asking employers of labor

at conveniently located points, if they will cooperate with the government by allowing their men certain periods of leave of absence at the time of harvest. Wherever there is found a willingness to grant these leaves without endangering the standing of the men in their regular employment, representatives of the government will attempt to organize what they term "vacation clubs." Certain numbers of men, whose fitness for harvest work is obvious, will be asked to join these clubs. They will be organized into excursions and the best rates obtainable will be secured for them. They will go to points where it is positively known there is work for them. There they will be employed for two weeks, a month, six weeks. When the harvest is over they will return to the mills or mines from which they came and to their former jobs.

There are material difficulties in the way of working this plan under present conditions. The railroads, for instance, are being anxious and grudging in the rates for the transportation of these harvest hands. They are unable, under the law, to do so. A rate may not be granted to one class of individuals and denied to another. If the distance to be traveled is great, all profits in such short time work are eaten up by the railroad fare. Yet the railroads would be willing, if they were allowed to grant very favorable rates to harvest hands. They are anxious to get the crops gathered that they may haul them. The department of labor, if its experiments are successful, will probably ask the next Congress for special legislation that will allow special rates to harvest hands.

The beneficial results that would accrue from a system of this sort are regarded as being many and great. In the first place, Secretary Wilson is convinced that the workmen would regard it as a most pleasurable vacation. He calls attention to the fact that most vacationers work harder when away from their tasks than when performing them. They row boats, climb mountains, go tramping. It would seem, therefore, that vacation should be defined as a change of work. Parties of factory workers would probably regard two weeks in the harvest fields as a great lark. They would return to their ordinary tasks much benefited.

The educational effect upon the worker would be great. He would be given an opportunity to see a world that was entirely new to him. He would be given a new interest in life. Great numbers of workers have the idea that they would like to get back to the soil. Yet they know nothing of how to accomplish this end. Here they are given an opportunity to learn and to determine whether they would like the life. Many of these men have money in the bank. It is recognized that one of the greatest of national needs is that the tide should turn back to the land. It is reasonable to suppose that these harvest time vacations would lead many men to farming.

But there are still other classes of workers to whom the federal government is this year to extend more detailed aid in securing work in the harvest fields. There are two very large classes whose vacation seasons come at harvest time. These are the teachers of the nation and the youngsters who are being taught. Teachers are not earners of large salaries, and there are thousands of young men are working their way through school. The government hopes to have the opportunities for employment so well in hand by the time the present school terms end, that it will be able to tell these two classes where they may go for immediate employment. The harvest fields offer good chances for saving considerable sums of money because there is no expense for board or lodging when so employed and the rather liberal wages, averaging about \$2.50 a day, are entirely clear. The experience of getting close to the great productive forces of the nation is regarded as a most valuable one to either of these classes of workers.

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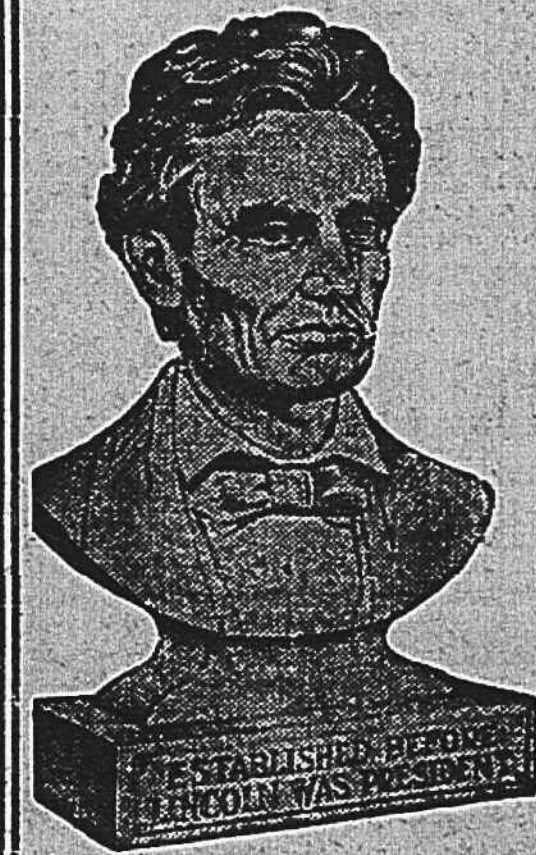
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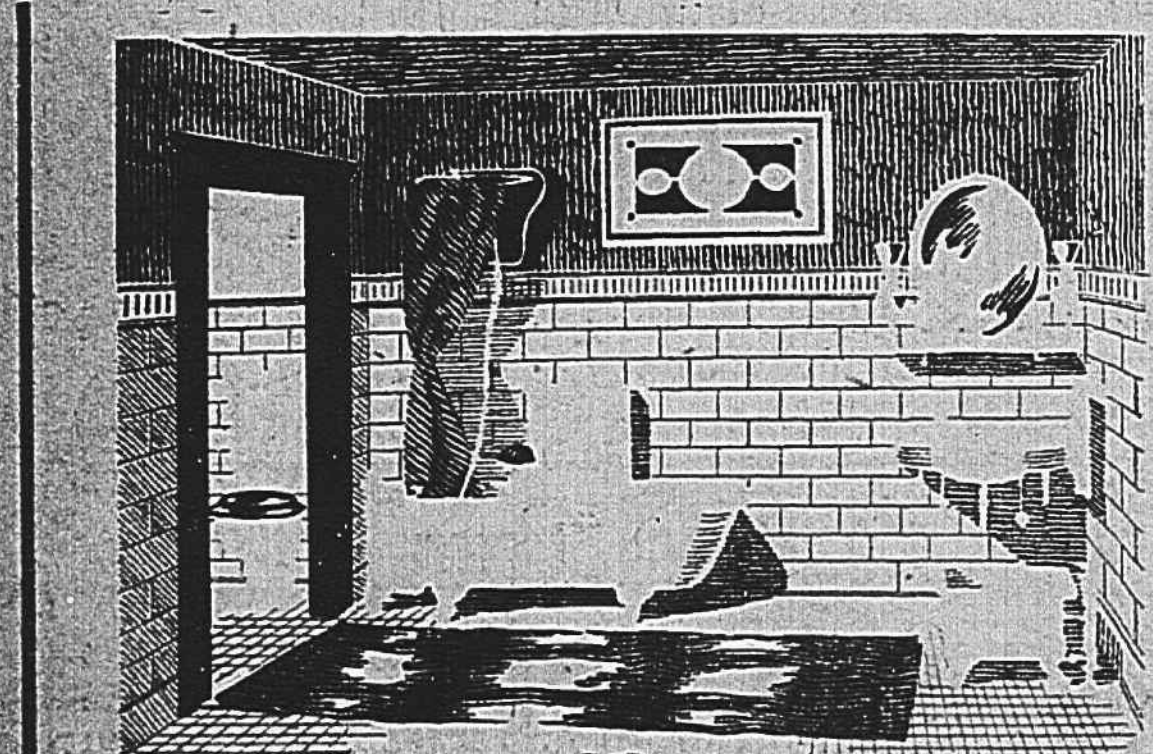
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## TOMMY ATKINS AIMS RIFLE WITH PERISCOPE

New Invention Permits Firing  
with only Hands in View  
of the Enemy.

(Correspondence of Associated Press.)  
LONDON, Apr. 17.—The old Spanish way of holding the rifle overhead in firing from a trench so as to endanger only the hands of the firer, a method which has caused foreign observers to ridicule the fighting of the Spanish-American armies and which made the fire of the insurrectionists so ineffective in the Philippine war, has been adopted by the British army.

But it is not the haphazard fire, for instructors are now employed in the English training camps to teach this method of firing, which requires a new technique. These men have astonished skeptical officers by making shots that would be creditable to a sharpshooter under the old method of holding the rifle to the sight. Just how it is done is not explained, but it is known that the gun is held at arm's length in the air, upside down. Both sides are now directing a heavy continuous fire upon each other; and the men killed and wounded in the trenches are almost always struck on the head.



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